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AUTHOR	Brennan, Pamela; Donoghue, Anna Acitelli
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the English as a Second Language Program developed for educationally disadvantaged Mexican-American adults as part of the educational offerings of Project Step-Up, an OEO-funded demonstration program in San Diego. Project Step-Up features a multifold methodological approach incorporating techniques from (1) life skills problem-solving; (2) programmed instruction; and (3) learning laboratories. This rationale led to the extension of the language laboratory into the community. The students are experientially prepared to assume productive roles in the alien Anglo culture through individualized programs of job and community related materials, techniques, and tasks aimed at making them as bicultural as possible. Because it is believed that decision making in the language context is facilitated by contrasting the two cultures, the students are placed in contexts that allow them to collect cultural information, analyze it and act on it. Contrast is the catalyst for eliciting information about themselves in relation to both cultures. Contrast sets, a basic technique of linguistics, is thus extended to the notion of teaching biculturalism. (CL)

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BICULTURALISM THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

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By
Pamela Brennan
and
Anna Acitelli Donoghue

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Biculturalism* through Experiential Language Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe the English as a Second Language Program developed for educationally disadvantaged Mexican-American adults as part of the educational offerings of Project Step-Up, an OEO-funded demonstration program in San Diego. As stated in the proposal, Project Step-Up, administered by the Adult Division of the San Diego Community Colleges, features a "multifold methodological approach incorporating techniques from 1) life skills problem-solving; 2) programmed instruction; and 3) learning laboratories".

We indicate how life skills problem-solving, the philosophical and methodological rationale for the ESL Program, has led to the extension of the language laboratory into the Community. We also describe how this individualized program makes use of a variety of methods, and of programmed and non-programmed materials. The paper delineates the utilization of this approach to develop the program.

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*The term biculturalism here indicates the ability to function, operate or "compete" in two or more cultures. It should <u>not</u> be construed as value laden. For example, punctuality, competitiveness, etc. are a part of the American value syndrome. Therefore, from our point of view, people opting to successfully "adjust" to the American scene should be <u>aware</u> of the systems within which they are operating. We do <u>not</u> intend the term, therefore, to indicate absolute or universal values, especially not those of the authors. If we were training people to cope in, say, Japanese society, the principles would apply, but the content would be different. In short, this term as used in this paper should not smack of "cultural imperialism". It is a pragmatic approach to learning about language and culture.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

We base our curriculum on the premise that language cannot be separated from the culture of a people. (cf. Greenberg, J.H.: 1968, Hall, R.A.: 1960; Hymes, D.H.: 1964(a); Whorf, B.L.: 1956; Tax, S.: 1964(b).) Therefore, we use the language class as a vehicle for making the bridge between the culture a person is in and the culture into which he is moving. By "moving" into the culture, we mean approximating as closely as possible, the condition of being bi-cultural. A student must demonstrate by his daily behavior in a variety of situations, that he has internalized at least the outward trappings of North American culture.

In Project Step-Up the behavioral objective for the language student is that he be able to work and live in this culture with the same opportunity for success as his Anglo competitor. Language training is the means by which we affectively arm him with those skills which allow him to enter the job market and become a knowledgeable member of his community, with maximum comfort to himself and minimum abrasion to others.

In the job context, we focus on work habits, getting a job and "work" as a value in North American culture. Some of the survival behaviors related to work habits which we stress are: punctuality, consistent attendance, and interpersonal skills with supervisors and peers. We teach identification of job sources, techniques for being interviewed, filling out job applications, and presenting a "pleasant and confident" appearance. We discuss at length the concept of the "hard-worker syndrome" in American culture--"To work hard is good"; "Anyone who doesn't work is lazy"; "Anyone can really get a job if he really wants it".

We define the community as the place where the target culture is operative and where the student must be operative. A student must go "out there" so that he can try out his linguistic wings in the "real" world. He must get feedback on what he does, his mannerisms, his speech problems, his use of resources--and how he is being received by the "natives". He must learn how to pick up the natives' verbal and non-verbal cues for himself and discuss them in their cultural context. This means contrasting Anglo cultural behaviors with those manifest in his own culture, e.g.

1. Americans do not always shake hands when introduced and they do not always say good-bye or shake hands when leave-taking.
2. American children do not speak respectfully to their parents.
3. American women go to work or school instead of staying home to take care of their families.
4. Americans are always in a hurry.

In short, as Hymes (1964) has stated, "when structural description is extended outward via the referential function of a language, it leads from analysis of linguistic form into analysis of patterns of use in contexts of situations".

METHODOLOGY

We use a decision-making process to enable students to identify behaviors which are culturally different. The decision-making process consistently follows this sequence:

1. Awareness of needed skills/information.
2. Definition of skills/information.
3. Information-gathering.
4. Resolution of information into alternatives for action.
5. Selection of choices for action.
6. Action.
7. Evaluation of action taken.
8. Identification of the steps of this process for purposes of generalization to other situations.

Individualized Instruction: Diagnosis/Prescription

The decision-making process is used to individualize a program of instruction for each student. When a student enrolls, we administer the Ilyin Oral Interview** to determine his linguistic needs. In-depth interviews

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*** A placement test developed by Donna Ilyin of the Allemany Adult School in San Francisco. Project Step-Up is assisting in field testing the interview.

in Spanish reveal his job and community survival needs and goals. As a result of the testing and interviewing, we, in cooperation with the student, make a diagnosis of problems and write a prescription for language training centering around community and job. After three months in the program, the original diagnosis and prescription is reviewed with the student by a group of his peers who use this evaluation session to provide feedback about that student's progress in linguistic, job-related, and community-related skills.

Activities and Materials

To implement the original prescription plan of the student, we employ various activities and materials. The E.S.L. group takes part in role-playing (usually with video); observation exercises; community research (usually with video); analysis of statistical and cultural data; communication exercises; small group or individual instruction conducted by students, aides, and teachers; student-produced videotape sessions as weekly reviews; vocational games; and the customary language drills familiar to all language teachers.

The ESL section of the Learning Center is equipped with a variety of teaching machines. We make extensive use of hardware, particularly the videotape Porta-Pak (record and playback units) and audiotape players and recorders. We also use filmstrip viewers, slide projectors, audio flashcard readers, and typewriters.

Software used in the program consists of commercial, teacher made, and student made materials. The core textbook is in five levels with accompanying workbooks, readers, tapebooks, and tapes. This series is supplemented by a vocationally oriented text, visual aids (vocational and general), vocational resource materials, and community resource materials. The scheduling of community and job-related activities is determined by the time at which structures applicable to each activity appear in the core text. Teachers, aides, and students have developed programmed audio-tapes and audio flashcards for self-study of the material in the core text. The audio tapes for the Level One text have instructions in Spanish as well as Spanish translations of the English utterances the first time they appear. The audio flashcards use line drawings with stick figures as stimuli; Spanish translations appear on the backs of the cards.

Audiotapes, videotapes and audio flashcards, and visual aids have also been made for community and job-related lessons. For example, a student who is seeking a job as a custodian has his own set of flashcards and his own audiotape to practice the vocabulary and structures he will need on the job. One group of students visited a used car lot armed with the structures needed for inquiring about prices, condition of cars, and financing and brought back a videotape which provided them with feedback on their use of the structures they were practicing, their pronunciation, non-verbal behavior, as well as a lesson in consumer practices and the "hard sell".

Community information is collected, discussed, analyzed, and stored (cf. Donoghue, John D., "A Holistic Approach to Community Development"). Students are given community tasks and sent out into the community after having practiced the structures they will need to obtain the information. These interchanges with the natives are videotaped. The tapes are viewed by the whole group for feedback for the participants and their linguistic and "language in the culture" context.

However, the most important resources we utilize, besides the students themselves, are other people. The Learning Center adult basic education (ABE) students and staff, the man-in-the-street, the restaurant owner, apartment residents and anyone else who happens to be in the actual physical surroundings. In other words, we have "knocked out" the classroom walls and extended the laboratory into the community.

Placement

After the original diagnosis and prescription, the student is oriented to the program by his fellow students. If he is monolingual, he works individually with audiotapes with the help of the teacher, aide or other students for five lessons (about two weeks) at which time he is ready to join the larger group. If he knows some English, he immediately becomes part of the total group while pursuing individual language study until he commands the same structures as the large group.

For the remainder of his stay in the program, the student is a member of many sub-groups. Placement is dynamic and can depend on any of the following factors individually or in combination:

1. Specific linguistic problems (e.g. three people cannot distinguish the sounds b and v. They form a group).
2. Job interests (e.g. four students want to pass the Smog Device Installer Exam. They use video to interview a licensed mechanic who explains the engine parts. The replayed videotape is used for the creation of vocabulary, pronunciation and structural exercises.).
3. Community tasks such as using the structure "How much does x or y cost?", when it appears in the text. Five students then do a cost comparison study of neighborhood markets. After organizing the data, they report their analysis to the rest of the class using the same structure to practice conversation.

Student Responsibility

The role of the individual is just as ever-changing as is his placement in a group. He is both a learner and a teacher. He becomes a teacher when he knows something someone else does not know. What he knows could vary from how to operate the video or other equipment, to how many stores are in this block or the ability to use the structures in lesson nine. At various times he is a community resource, a researcher, a supervisor of role-playing in a job interview situation, a program orientation coordinator, an expert on a point of grammar, or a job counselor. A student may find himself in any one or several of these roles, but there are three fundamental requirements that are assigned to every student in the language program: he must recognize himself as being responsible for the growth and development of the language training group; he must determine the directions which his own learning takes; and he must set the pace at which he learns. In short, each student must gradually assume responsibility for becoming bicultural.

Teacher Responsibility

As teachers, we design the arena in which he can develop his multi-potentiality. We provide him with opportunities--such as, video feedback sessions--to measure for himself his progress in building competitive skills. The aim is that he sharpen his self-assessment skills in relation to behavioral criteria necessary for survival in the job and community

contexts. For purposes of instruction we separate "job" and "community". In practice, of course, these areas articulate with one another and cannot be separated; therefore, in the generalizations in a variety of situations encompassing job, community, and other aspects of culture.

Process Implementation

Earlier, we defined bicultural as being able to function in two cultures. Therefore, the activities that are constructed have as their objectives the acquisition of those skills which allow the student to compete in the target culture. We forced him to take responsibility for decision-making by putting him into situations in which he has to make decisions.

The following example of a language experience that occurred last December shows the decision-making process at work.

Process Lables***	Process Description
Awareness of needed skills/information	1. Expression of the realization that class enrollment had fallen below eighteen.
Definition of skills/information	2. "We need more students to maintain the program."
Information Gathering	3. "Why don't we have enough students? Some people have completed the program; some people got jobs. New ESL classes have been formed in Catholic Churches. "Are there more people who need ESL?" "Yes--especially in our (the students) neighborhood."
Alternatives	4. Alternative actions suggested: a. Put up posters. b. Talk to friends. c. Make presentations to neighborhood meetings. d. Get transportation to bring people

*** See page 3 for complete labels.

	to the Center.
Selection of Alternative	5. "Get transportation for potential students.
Redefinition of	2a. "We need transportation for potential students who live too far away to walk to school"
Information Gathering	3a. Model Cities is going to give buses to Department of Human Resources to be used in the Model Cities area.
	3b. The Learning Center is in the Model Cities area.
Information Gathering	3c. Mr. Sheldon is in charge of this bus service
Alternatives	4a. Send teacher to see Mr. Sheldon.
	4b. Send student representative to see Mr. Sheldon.
	4c. Have the entire class go to see Mr. Sheldon.
Selection of Alternative for Action	5. Have the entire class see Mr. Sheldon.
Action	6. Practiced structures for conversation with Mr. Sheldon.
	6a. Class went to see Mr. Sheldon.
	6b. Mr. Sheldon told them to write a petition.
Information Gathering	3d. They brainstormed writing the petition and decided that they needed high-level support.
Alternatives	4d. Write a petition in Spanish or English.
	4e. Get a politically powerful individual to support the petition.
Selection of Alternatives	5a. Write petition in both Spanish and English.
	5b. Have Learning Center Director attend Model

		Cities meeting with the students to indicate the problem the students have in getting transportation to class.
Action	6a.	Petition mailed; meeting attended.
Evaluation of Action	7.	A Model Cities bus was scheduled that would pick up students close to their homes and bring them to the learning Center. More students enrolled in the ESL class. Thus, students rated the decision as good.
Process identification for generalization	8.	Class reviewed events and applied the process to stages of decision-making.

This experience forced the students to take responsibility for the continuation of their ESL class. Other linguistic, job-related, and cultural skills were also developed within the lesson.

CONCLUSION

We have set forth the decision-making process by which we experientlly prepare the Mexican-American students to assume a productive role in the "alien" Anglo culture. Because each person brings with him to the ESL class his own peculiar set of linguistic and cultural sets, we prepare an individualized program of job and community related materials, techniques, and tasks for each student aimed at making him as bicultural as possible.

We feel that too much rhetoric has been expended by many language teachers extolling the virtues of continuing "one's own" cultural behaviors without taking into account the fact that the foreign student has to be able to move into an alien culture and survive in it. For years, we as teachers have been putting the adult student into an almost impossible situation by not letting him identify the behaviors that are acceptable in the society into which he is moving. We have expected him to be a voting citizen, but we did not let him discover what voting could or could not do for him. We expected him to be punctual on the job, but we did not let him experience how and why Americans valued time. We expected to find a

job, but we did not give him practice in information gathering and analysis. We expected him to be able to make his own decisions, but we did not include decision-making in his curriculum.

We believe that decision-making in the language context is facilitated by contrasting the student's culture with Anglo culture. For this reason, we place the student in contexts that allow him to collect cultural information, analyze it and act on it. Contrast is the catalyst for eliciting information about himself in relation to his own culture and the alien culture. We treat the two cultures side by side, one contrasted with the other. Contrast sets, a basic technique of linguistics, is thus extended to the notion of teaching biculturalism.

Paper presented at the Inter-American Seminar on Literacy in Social and Economic Development, April 9-13, 1972, Key Biscayne, Florida.

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